

News

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COMMUNITY

Limerick's love affair with the moving pictures

Limerick's enduring affection for the cinema is enjoying a new lease of life with local enthusiasts spearheading efforts to revive the allure of the silver screen in towns like Cappamore, Rathkeale and Newcastlewest.

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A COUNTY Limerick town once known for its passion for the movies is planning to have a new cinema operating after an interval of almost 30 years.

The silver screen in Cappamore's Regal Cinema is set to sparkle again, thanks to a €400,000 plan to upgrade the town's community centre and convert it into a venue for movies, concerts and shows.

The Cappamore Development Association in consultation with Ballyhoura Development is in the process of putting plans together for the 400 seater project. The finance is expected to come from ongoing fund-raising in the town along with the possibility of grant aid.

Details of the project were revealed to Limerick Post by Oliver Dillon, secretary of the Cappamore Development Association who also heads up the Bunratty Mead and Liqueur Company near Bunratty Castle.

"We believe there is a market in the area for a

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What killed the cinema in the end was the lounge bar with its entertainment

JOHN DINNAGE,
RATHKEALE CINEMA ENTHUSIAST

cinema and concert hall and the completion of this project would be part of a further development initiative for the town".

He recalled that the Regal, which was purpose-built as a cinema, used to screen films three weeks before they got to Limerick.

"It was a landmark cinema and people came from all over counties Limerick and Tipperary and many of the great films came to the cinema here which was run by the Gleeson family. Film-maker David Gleeson, a member of the family, wrote and directed the feature films 'Cowboys & Angels' and 'The Front Line'. You could go to the pictures and afterwards go across the road to the Star Ballroom" he added.

Nestling in the shadow of the Slieve Felim mountains, Cappamore wasn't just known for its cinema and ballroom, it was also the 'big top' capital of Munster with all of the big circuses starting their season there. It's even recorded that on Easter Monday 1894, not one but two circuses arrived together and eventually played in opposite fields.

Other cinemas were in Newcastle West, Kilmallock, Abbeyfeale, Glin and Rathkeale and these have been replaced by cinema clubs in some towns. The latest such undertaking was



The all-time classic Casablanca by Michael Curtiz that brought a touch of 1940s glamour to Rathkeale

in Rathkeale, and under the umbrella of the Community Arts Club its first film showing was the classic 'Casablanca' which was a huge success.

Local shopkeeper John Dinnage, a man steeped in the tradition of cinema, revealed that the patrons dressed up for the night in period 'Forties outfits. "We hope to have another showing in the coming weeks," he said.

THE DROMCOLLOGHER BURNING

One County Limerick town that has tragic and lasting memories of a picture show is Dromcollogher which saw 48 of its parishioners of all ages perish in a fire on the premises on Sunday September 5, 1926.

A large Celtic Cross marks the communal grave in the local churchyard and a memorial library was erected at the site of the fire where photographs, newspapers and other material relating to the tragedy are displayed.

His grandfather Henry built the now closed purpose-built Central Cinema in Rathkeale in 1945 and which put the lights out for the last time exactly 40 years ago. It still stands on Main Street and is a listed building.

John was a projectionist there as a 12-year-old and recalled: "There was nothing else around in the 'Forties and 'Fifties and the cinema was the only place to go. What killed the cinema in the end was the lounge bar with its entertainment where women could go to with their husbands or boyfriends, and then along came television".

The people of Newcastlewest are still talking about what the town has lost in its two cinemas and swimming pool although it has a cinema club.

Newcastlewest Community Council treasurer Seamus Hunt Snr. says the town still misses its cinemas Lee's and Nash's and if you want to go to the pictures now, you have an hour's drive to Limerick.

"The cinemas were well patronised in their day. We grew up with them and people used to go a few times a week.

"The are definitely a big loss to the town," he added.

EDUCATION

LIT's first Fulbright Scholar begins Boston studies

LIMERICK Institute of Technology's first successful Fulbright Scholar has started his studies as a visiting professor at the Northeastern University (NEU) in Boston.

Dr Daragh Naughton from the Department of Mechanical and Automobile Engineering was one of only two recipients from the Institute of Technology sector to receive the prestigious award.

Stating that he was delighted to be given the opportunity to experience faculty life at such a dynamic and proud university, Dr Naughton said that the campus has a long heritage in engineering amongst other disciplines.

"LIT and NEU have many things in common, but it is our differences that I am keen to explore. Hopefully, the visit will forge strong links between our institutions upon which we can build in the future."

The Fulbright awards are jointly funded by the Irish and US governments under the Ireland-United States (Fulbright) Commission for Educational Exchange.

Dr Naughton will undertake research in the area of materials science as well as developing the concept of signature pedagogy for undergraduate engineers.

Fulbright scholarships have provided Irish students, scholars and professionals with the opportunity to study, lecture and research at top universities and institutions in the US since 1957.

New professor of medicine at UL

UL HAS appointed Professor Austin G Stack, as the first Foundation Chair and Professor of Medicine and consultant nephrologist at University Hospital Limerick's Graduate Entry Medical School.

A native of Cromane, and past pupil of the Intermediate School Killorglin in Co Kerry, Professor Stack has trained in Ireland and the United States with previous academic appointments at the University of Michigan and the University of Texas Medical School at Houston.

Head of the Graduate Entry Medical School, Professor Michael Larvin said the Graduate Entry Medical School counted itself very fortunate to have attracted an individual of the calibre of Professor Austin Stack to its inaugural Chair in Medicine.

"Professor Stack brings a wealth of clinical, research and educational experience to the University of Limerick and to its associated teaching hospitals."

Stating that he felt "incredibly privileged and honoured" by the appointment, Prof. Stack said UL had huge opportunities and responsibilities to produce mature and competent doctors that are equipped for a modern health system. In July 2013, almost 90 doctors will graduate from our medical school in Limerick and begin careers in medicine across Ireland, Canada and North America".

Professor Stack's research addresses the impact of kidney disease in large populations and he is currently exploring methods of predicting kidney disease progression.